

TENNESSEE COMMISSION ON INDIAN AFFAIRS PUBLIC MEETING

Saturday, December 2, 2006
Chucalissa Archaeological Museum
1987 Indian Drive
Memphis, TN 38109 901/785-3160

Present were: Evangeline "Van" Lynch, Vice Chair, Secretary/Treasurer Ruth Knight Allen, Kippy Vaughn, Jeanie Walkingstick King and General Council Ed Harris. A quorum of Commissioners was present. Absent were: Niles Aseret and Jimmy Reedy. Resignation of Chair Doris Tate Trevino resulted in one vacancy.

Meeting Called to order by:

Vice Chair Van Lynch at 10:10 a.m. and reminded anyone wishing to speak to sign the register. Commissioner Vice Chair Lynch introduced Mr. Robert Rush, her long time friend, who will serve as parliamentarian for the meeting.

Opening prayer was by **Cubert Bell, Sr.**, Choctaw, Mississippi Band

Roll Call: Van Lynch, Ruth Knight Allen, Kippy Vaughn, Jeanie Walkingstick King. Niles Aseret, arrival expected, Jimmy Reedy, noticed he would not be attending.

Selection of a Chair to fill vacancy.

Motion #1

Commissioner Allen moved that **Vice Chair Lynch** be elected **Chair**. **Seconded by Commissioner Vaughn**. **Motion Carried.**

Motion #2

Commissioner Allen moved that **Commissioner Kippy Vaughn** be elected **Vice Chair**. **Seconded by Commissioner King**. **Motion Carried.**

Review of Agenda:

Agenda Chair Lynch explained that the TDEC Report and actions on Recognition Criteria has been put on hold by TDEC. The Attorney General will research and respond to the CNO documents. **Agenda Chair Lynch** requested adding Grants Discussion under **New Business** and Eagle Awards be added under **Organizational Reports**.

Motion #3

Agenda Chair Lynch moved approval of the revised **Agenda**. **Seconded by Commissioner Vaughn**. **Motion Carried.**

Minutes of the August 5, 2006 meeting were reviewed. Motions from the August meeting were read. **Secretary/Treasurer Allen** asked that the Minutes be approved.

Motion #4

Commissioner Vaughn moved that the **Minutes** be approved. **Seconded by Commissioner King**. **Motion carried.**

Treasurer's Report was distributed and explained that GLIC dues of \$100.00 was paid leaving a balance of \$292.70. **Secretary/Treasurer Allen** asked that the Treasurer's Report be approved.

Motion #5

Commissioner Vaughn moved that the **Treasurer's Report** be approved. **Seconded by Commissioner King**. **Motion carried.**

Communications:

Chair Lynch commented on a notice from Pat Cummins of the Alliance for Native American Indian Rights. A Law became effective on July 1 prohibiting the ebay sales of Native American Indian grave items in Tennessee.

Chair Lynch stated that there had been discussion on donations for the food provided at the meetings to go into the Commission Treasury. She mentioned that it might be a good gesture if there could be donations toward the needs of former Commissioner John Anderson. He is presently in New York receiving medical treatments.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Vaughn reported that she is working with the Boy Scouts to assure that they know the traditions of the Native American Indians they wish to portray. She is working with Pat Cummings on an issue of a local vendor selling grave artifacts at a flea market. Their investigation is ongoing. A Written report submitted.

Commissioner King reported her attendance at Native American Indian Day at the Blount County Library in Maryville. There were Native American Indian displays, story telling and dancing. Loretta Howard, of the library staff, and the James Yellow Eagle family organized and participated in the event.

Commissioner King encouraged interested persons to contact Ms Howard to participate in the March 2-3, 2007 Multicultural Celebration at the library. A written report was submitted

Commissioner Allen reported that she, Mary Lou Awiakta, and Alice Henry were speakers on the Native American Indian perspective at a session of the *Promoting the Science of Ecology Conference* held in Memphis, August 7-11. The responsive group was large and diverse in ages and backgrounds. At a dinner hosted by the conference leaders, possible grants from the organization were discussed. September and October were fairly quiet except for calls and emails regarding the recognition criteria. Jimmy and Chris Thipgen, my daughter, Shelley, and I attended the Saturday session of the NAIA Pow Wow in Nashville, October 21. A written report was submitted. **Commissioner Allen** stated that Governor Bredesen has appointed her to be the liaison with the Native American Indian communities and the Census Bureau on the 2010 Census. She asked cooperation on encouraging members of the communities to be open to help with the Census. She said that it is a well-known fact that Native American Indians do not trust government paperwork. She said that is the reason why a recognition criteria is essential in helping identify and validate the communities.

Commissioner Lynch reported that, due to her illness and liver transplant, she has not been able to attend Commission meetings or be very involved in community Indian affairs. She was pleased to relate her experiences at a Mini Pow Wow her family gave for her birthday in November. She stated that people in the area are becoming very interested in Native American Indian Pow Wows. She said she was able to sit in her wheelchair and enjoy the festivities and food and share with her many friends. Written report submitted.

Public Comments:

Tamera Hicks spoke on a Native American Indian license plate project that the previous Commission approved. She stated that some of us (those present) who had been around a long time should remember that. She said she had spoken with **Tony Mack McClure** and **Cubert Bell** about the process and wanted the input from those present at this meeting on reintroducing the project. She stated that the previous project depended on 500 people to sign up and pay, in advance, for one of the plates. It had an eagle on it. It is a personalized license plate and she believed the cost was possibly \$50.00. She stated that the previous TCIA and the Indian Community voted on that. She said that she would contact the TN Department of Safety for any updates on rules and regulations on the process. **Ms Hicks** said that **Mr. McClure** was sending her the information he has on the subject and **Mr. Bell** agreed to work with **Ms Hicks** on the project. She said that she would like to have one of the plates herself. She hopes to have all the information to present at the next Commission meeting. She said some of the proceeds could go to a fund for that. Many of those present stated that they would like to purchase one of the license plates. Comments from those attending this meeting indicated that the project would probably have better support this time. **Ms Hicks** gave a report on a Trail of Tears wall hanging created by sewing colored buttons in the shapes of footprints. **Shirley Lawrence**, Tennessee Trail of Tears Association, **Cleata Townsend**, and **Ms Hicks** are collecting the buttons. The buttons are to be colored – no white – and may be sent to any of the three of them. Include your name, address, phone number and tribal affiliation, especially from the five civilized tribes. **Ms Hicks'** phone number is 1/888/711-2339 extension 1104. **Ms Townsend's** phone number is 1/423/698-2804. Call for information on sending the buttons. The wall hanging is to be displayed at Blythe Ferry Commemorative Park.

Freeman Robinson stated that he has been traveling and is now back in Tennessee. He asked **Commissioner Allen** to explain her reference to "Native American voting bloc" in speaking about 2010 Census. **Commissioner Allen** explained that politicians do not seem to like vague numbers without names and addresses. Political people seem to want to know "what can these people do for us" when they are asked to sponsor a project. Who are they and where do they live? She stated that the Commission is weak now, but it will get stronger with support. **Commissioner Allen** suggested that Indian people should pick out one to three major issues on which to focus. **Mr. Robinson** stated that he came back from Alaska in 2003 and has found that people are still not progressing. He said that a lot of Indian people do not participate in voting. He said they have to be taught about issues and voting. He suggested visiting in the homes to explain what is going on. **Chair Lynch** stated that many of the elders do not speak or understand English very well and that for the elderly there is a need for translators. **Mr. Ed Vinson** stated that a lot of people do not know there is a Commission. **Commissioner Vaughn** also commented that the Commission is not well known among the Indian communities.

Ms Winona Yellowhammer asked Commissioner Allen for details of the census. **Commissioner Allen** stated that she has only received the letter of appointment and will share any information she receives.

Ms. Selena Tant, American Indian Association – Millington, suggested contacting webmasters to get the word out. She volunteered the AIA Millington to put links on their website.

Old Business:

Chair Lynch read the Resolution for the Preservation of the Historic Native American Indian Tribes of Tennessee. Support for this Resolution was voted on and approved at the March 2006 TCIA meeting. She stated that sponsorship in the House and Senate is still to be sought during this coming legislative session. She mentioned House Representative Mike Kernell and Senator Roy Herron have been supportive in the past and may possibly be solicited as our sponsors for the Resolution.

New Business:

Chair Lynch read and explained the two opinions of the Attorney General regarding the 89 people recognized as Native American Indian by the previous TCIA and the status of the Eastern Lenape Nation. The Opinion of the AG opinion on the 89 is that their recognition is still valid.

The AG opinion on the Eastern Lenape Nation is that the previous TCIA did not receive updated information on the organization within the two-year requirement. Therefore the Eastern Lenape Nation is invalid under the old rules and there are no rules for recognition in the present TCIA. **Commissioner Allen** suggested that the TCIA send an official letter informing them of the AG decision and inviting them to reapply when the TCIA has a new recognition criteria in place. Commissioners agreed for **Commissioner Allen**, as Secretary, to write the letter.

Commissioner Allen reported that she received a package of recognition material from Angelia Collins Watson and suggested that a letter from the TCIA explaining the position of the TCIA be sent to her, also. Commissioners agreed.

Chair Lynch spoke on the need for localized Indian Health Services. She said that many of the elderly are moving back to Philadelphia, MS for health care access. **Mr. Bell** stated that tribes receive Federal Funds for health care for Federally Recognized Indians. **Mr. Robinson** stated that those outside the 200-mile radius may or may not receive aid. **Commissioner Allen** stated that this is another reason for the census to reflect the Indian makeup of Tennessee population. Her doctor asked for copies of the paperwork necessary to determine if his office could comply and has not received the paperwork. **Ms Yellowhammer** asked what facilities were needed? **Chair Lynch** replied that, at present, contractual care is needed and that Ripley, TN is working on a facility. Union University has agreed to provide assistance for hands on experience for their nursing program. **Commissioner Allen** stated that **Ms Wynell Briggs** called regarding a program for eye care for Native American Indians. She will follow up with **Ms Briggs**.

Chair Lynch spoke of the need for a Funding/Grants Committee. She asked that Commissioner Vaughn chair the committee. She will be an ex-officio member. She asked **Tom Kunesh** to serve on this committee and will contact **Dale Mitchell**, also of ACTIA about serving. She will contact **Al Beal** to serve in an At Large member on the Funding/Grants Committee.

Chair Lynch asked **Josh Gorman** to give information on Chucalissa Museum. **Mr. Gorman** stated that since Dan **Swan** accepted a position in Oklahoma, he (**Mr. Gorman**) is serving as interim director of the museum. He reported on projects to improve relations with the Shelby County School System and to assist in developing classroom curriculum. Middle school students are a main source of visitors to the museum. The Museum staff networking with Mississippian tribal entities on repatriation of remains is progressing favorably. **Mr. Gorman** pledged assistance to the Commission with links to websites. He presented an example of a digitally scanned artifact, which was reproduced in plastic. He stated that the item demonstrates how technology can assist museums in education.

Organizations Reports:

Joe McCaleb presented the NAIA report for **Ray Emmanuel**. This year is the 25th anniversary of NAIA. NAIA is the oldest 501c3 organization in the state. The Sumner County village site was donated to NAIA by the developer in 1994-95. The site dates back to 1350AD with approximately 1000 burials. He and members of the Alliance maintain the site six months of the year. He invited any one willing to volunteer to assist in the maintenance of these sites to contact the Alliance. **Mr. McCaleb** outlined plans for the NAIA *Circle of Life Indian Center*. A written report was submitted. **Ms Winona Yellowhammer** distributed material from the NAIA 2006 Pow wow and explained how funds were used. **Ms Sally Wells** asked for public input on how other organizations solicited funding for and with their projects.

Commissioner Allen stated that the Far Away Cherokee/NAIA of Memphis, (**Mrs. Alice Henry, Chair**) works on fund raising. The organization does programs with schools and businesses and uses the money for emergency assistance and scholarships for Native American Indians. **Mr. John Smith** reported that the Far Away Cherokee also assists Native American Indians traveling through Memphis. They are planning a Cultural Fair to represent other cultures as well as Native American Indian.

Joe McCaleb, ACTIA Vice Chair, read from a written report by **David Teat**, Chair. He complimented the TCIA for inviting other organizations to report their concerns and other work to the Commission. ACTIA members are encouraged to consider the other mandates of the organization as well as the recognition criteria and to move on to other issues. ACTIA is involved in recruiting new members with special skills. **Mr. Teat** distributed copies of the ACTIA Resolution on the Recognition Criteria. This Resolution was presented to and was affirmed Commission support at the August 5, 2006 TCIA meeting. **Mr. McCaleb** stated that he had been asked by ACTIA and TNNAC, as an attorney, to meet with **General Counsel Ed Harris** and **AG Sohnia Hong** on the Commission vacancy and the CNO document. He hopes for a response within the next week.

Chair Lynch spoke on the proposed NAIA *Circle of life Native American Indian Center* project and stated that she believed it to be a worthy cause for Commission support. **Chair Lynch** recommended that the Commissioners attend as many powwows and events as possible as a means of meeting the people and the people to meet the Commissioners. **Commissioner Allen** stated that the previous Commission had no budget, but travel in state was funded from the TDEC contingency funds. She said that introductions at powwows and events were a good way to promote the Commission and an opportunity to pass out our business cards. **Mr. Robinson** asked that initials of organizations was sometimes confusing and recommended that attention be given to saying the whole name. The Far Away Cherokee/NAIA Memphis initial is: Native American Intertribal Association and NAIA Nashville is Native American Indian Association.

John Smith reported for TNNAC in the absence of **Vicky Garland**. He explained that TNNAC is the democratic process by which the Native American Indian communities select the nominees for Commissioners of Indian Affairs. Items being worked on are: Absentee Ballots – because travel to the voting sites presents problems for some people – and the issue of two names available in off years in the event of a vacancy. He invited everyone to attend the meetings.

Committees:

Agenda Committee: **Van Lynch**, Chair, also Agenda Committee Chair; **Kippy Vaughn**, **Ruth Knight Allen**.

Education Committee: **Van Lynch**, Chair, also Committee Chair, **Kippy Vaughn**, **Ruth Knight Allen**. Chair Lynch asked **Mr. Cubert Bell, Sr.** to serve and will contact **Mr. Brent Cox** about serving on the Education Committee.

Health Committee: **Van Lynch**, Chair, **Niles Aseret**, **Ruth Knight Allen**, **Jeanie Walkingstick King**.

Housing Committee: **Kippy Vaughn**, Chair, **Jeanie Walkingstick King**. It was recommended that each Commissioner in his/her area research housing available and needs to report to the Committee.

Memorial project: **Ruth Knight Allen**, liaison with ACTIA on the project.

Repatriation Committee: **Niles Aseret**, Chair, **Kippy Vaughn**, **Jimmy Reedy**. Possibly the new Commissioner appointed to serve on this Committee.

Rules and Procedures Committee: **Van Lynch**, Chair, **Kippy Vaughn**, **Ruth Knight Allen**.

Website Committee: **Ruth Knight Allen**, Chair, **Van Lynch**. There was discussion on possibilities for better communication using the TDEC website. Posting is done through **General Counsel Ed Harris**, **Paula Slack** and **Debbie Ownby**. **General Counsel Harris** explained that use of the TDEC website and TDEC communication system was on pro bono from the TDEC standpoint and the cost of time was absorbed by TDEC. **Commissioner Allen** stated that she and her daughter started a newsletter for the previous Commission entitled *THE SHIELD*. After two issues, at their own expense, the newsletter was researched by **Acting Director Luvenia Butler** and found to be too expensive for TDEC to continue. It was designed by **Commissioner Allen** to allow subscriptions at a fee to cover cost, but was still discontinued.

Funding/Grants Committee: **Kippy Vaughn**, Chair, **Van Lynch**, ex officio member, **Tom Kunesh**, (**Dale Mitchell**, not asked or agreed to yet), (**Al Beal** – at large member, not asked or agreed to yet).

Public Comments:

Joe McCaleb stated that TDEC has many boards and commissions and he believes this is the first one that has no PA system. He said that some commissioners and members of the public speak so softly that it is difficult, to impossible, to understand what is being said. He strongly recommends that the Commission request TDEC to supply a portable public address system to use at Commission meetings.

Motion #6

Commissioner Allen moved that the TCIA request the use of a portable public address system from TDEC for future Commission meetings. Seconded by Commissioner Vaughn. Motion carried.

Announcements:

Commissioner Lynch reminded that applications for the three division Commissioner positions would be due during March 1 through April 30, 2007. All area caucuses will be held on June 23, 2007 and the Convention will be held at Long Hunter State Park on September 15, 2007. **Commissioner Allen** asked **John Smith**, TNNAC representative, if forms would be available for those wishing to run only as a "Runner Up"? **Mr. Smith** responded that TNNAC would be working on the situation of presenting two names and assuring two nominees during off years. **Mr. McCaleb** reminded everyone that TNNAC is not a state agency but an independent organization and will meet and decide on bylaws changes to be made. **Mr. Billy Nuckles** questioned numbering order of those nominated. There was extensive explanation of the process. **Commissioner Allen** pointed out that those not understanding political processes should seek assistance from those who can explain and that those who can help should do so with sensitivity. Ms **Shelley Allen** asked how **Mr. John Anderson** could be a nominee when he is out of state? It was explained by **Mr. McCaleb** that **Mr. Anderson's** domicile was still listed in Tennessee.

Date of next TCIA meeting was discussed and decided for March 17, 2007 in Nashville. **Ms Tamera Hicks**, who is a state employee, volunteered to secure a meeting room at the TDOT Regional Office in Nashville.

Commissioner King Invited everyone to contact **Ms Loretta Howard**, phone number 865/982-9998, for information and/or to participate in the Multicultural Celebration in Maryville, TN, March 2-3, 2007.

Closing Prayer: Rev. Robert Rush

Motion #7

Commissioner Vaughn moved to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner King. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned 2:50

Ruth Knight Allen, Secretary/Treasurer